

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

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P 011700Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7179

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E.O. 11652: N/A DECON 4/1/75

TAGS: ELAB, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE LABOR CALLS OFF APRIL 2 GENERAL STRIKE

1. SUMMARY: LEBANESE LABOR CONFEDERATION CALLS OFF APRIL 2 GENERAL STRIKE AFTER WINNING LAST-MINUTE GOL CONCESSIONS ON MAJOR UNION DEMANDS. END SUMMARY.
2. AS LABOR CONFEDERATIONS'S THREATENED APRIL 2 GENERAL STIKE CAME DOWN TO THE WIRE, LEBANESE AUTHORITIES WINKED, BLINKED AND FINALLY CONCEDED BULK OF UNIONS' DEMANDS.
3. AFTER WEEKEND OF REPEATED GOL CONSULTATIONS WITH LABOR LEADERS, CULMINATING IN MARATHON SESSION AT LABOR MINISTRY APRIL 1, GOVT AGREED TO TAKE NECESSARY ACTIONS TO (A) REVISE ARBITRARY DESMISSAL CLAUSE IN EXISTING LABOR CODE, (B) MODIFY FOODSTUFF IMPORT LICENSING TO BREAK MONOPOLY OF EXCLUSIVE REPS, (C) RAISE INCOME CEILING FOR INCOME TAX EXEMPTION TO LL 6,000 ANNUALLY, (D) EXTEND RECENT 10 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE TO WORKERS BELOW AGE 20, ND (E) SHORTEN WORKER'S WAITING PERIOD FOR MEDICAL COVERAGE FROM 2 YEARS TO 3 MONTHS AFTER HIRING.
4. RE CONCESSIONS REQUIRING PARLIAMENTARY FOLLOWTHROUGH, GOL

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AGREED TO SET UP COMMITTEE WITH LABOR REPRESENTATION TO DRAFT

APPROPRIATE AMENDMENT LEGISLATION.

5. IN VIEW AUTHORITIES' SUDDEN RESPONSIVENESS ON ALL CLAIMS, SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN PENDING FOR YEARS, CONFEDERATION LEADERS ACQUIESCED IN CANCELLATION STRIKE CALL AND, AT LAST REPORT, HAD COMMISSIONED TWO OUTSPOKEN ADVOCATES OF STRIKE (GEORGE SACRE AND HASSIB ABDELJAWAD) TO DRAFT APPROPRIATE COMMUNIQUE TO WORKERS.

6. COMMENT: GOL'S BELATED CONCESSIONS APPEAR PREDICATED ON TWO BASIC OBJECTIVES: TO HEAD OFF CONVERGENCE OF LABOR STRIKE WITH ONGOING STUDENT UNREST AND TO ASSURE RE-ELECTION OF MODERATE (GABRIEL KHOURY) AT HELM OF CONFEDERATION. AS IN CASES OF TWO RECENT WAGE INCREASES, GOL HAS ONCE AGAIN GIVEN IN AT LAST MOMENT AND HAS MET LABOR DEMANDS AT EXPENSE OF EMPLOYERS. GODLEY

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